



### A Small Uprising

It's almost sunny that first Monday. The bluffs above the falls at Oregon City seem ready for a rainbow. Nose in the wind, we're feeling our oats and our nurse, young Tasha, shortens our leash crossing the highway to the overlook.

Many white eyes have come. The ones from Channel 6 with a wagon with a satellite dish. The attraction du jour is far below us on the rocks. Against a backdrop of the ugliest paper mill this side of Minsk, a small band of tribal fishermen are building the first of several scaffolds.

They're here because, for the first time in 10,000 years, not enough spring salmon made it up the Columbia to meet even the River People's ceremonial needs. Next to us, a descendant of white settlers squints and spits.

"They're pushing it if you ask me."  
Stifling a snarl, Nurse Tasha explains sweetly that the River People worship the salmon.

"Whoever heard of praying to a fish?"

On the other side of us, a young woman is just back from driving home to fetch her binoculars.  
"This is something to tell your grandchildren," Tasha says, filling her in on the police boat waiting to pinch people catching fish that are theirs by treaty right.

"You're kidding," the young woman says. "That's really crummy."

You could say that, yes.  
Building a scaffold in fast water is slow work. The afternoon drifts by, punctuated by rumor. The fishermen were shot at last night. Their first scaffold was torn down and pitched into the river by good old boy fishing dudes you don't see in beer commercials. (The gunshots were never corroborated, the midnight vandalism was.)

An Indian couple comes by with their children. Our new friend hands the little boy her binoculars. There are smiles and thank-yous. She leans over and cups her hand to our ear.

"I've never met an Indian before."  
Progress in small things.  
We don't wear a watch but Nurse Tasha says it was a little past six when the first eagle arrived. Muted oohs and ahhs from the crowd. On cue, the sun comes out and the young woman shades her eyes.

"I've never seen an eagle before either."  
And then there are two. They circle the Indians and the rush hour traffic.

"Is this obvious, or what?" Nurse asks no one in particular.  
"It's like they know," the young woman says.

The settler concerned with pushy Indians snorts, spits, and gets into his Buick.  
There are three eagles now.

"Have you ever?" an old woman asks her husband. He shakes his head, watching one endangered species circling another. Down on the rocks, the police boat arrives.

And now there are five eagles. Circles within circles, drifting off to the south. We watch, all of us, listening to the wind, feeling a fragile sense of place, and wondering about the roots of coincidence.

### Salmon & Cans

by Victoria Pitkanen Stoppello

My dad was a commercial fisherman; he ran a troller, the *Sellie*, out of Ilwaco most of his life. His father before him was a fisherman too, a gillnetter. I remember what I refer to as "the last salmon" that my dad brought me when I was still living in Portland. It was a silver, rightly called a coho, and didn't seem that big. That was in the early 80's fishing was already bad then. My dad sold his boat and commercial license not long after. Fish have been a big part of my family life. Going to the docks with my other grandpa to buy sturgeon. Extended family meals centered on fish head stew or fried sturgeon or a big salmon roast or smelt grilled on the basement wood stove. Those days are gone.

My husband on the other hand, is an architect. And kind of a nut. When we're out walking and he sees an aluminum can along our path, he exclaims "hey, another smolt!" and puts it in his pocket. Maybe he's not a nut, maybe he's a radical. He's been involved in the politics of energy for a long time. When he sees aluminum lying around on the ground, he equates it with the fish that are killed by the dams.

Yeah, a lot of people think the fish ought to do all right going up the fish ladders. They do. It's the young fry, the smolts, coming downstream, that the dams really kill. It's estimated that 90% of the smolts headed for the sea are ground up in the turbines of one dam or another and the rest are put at risk by the intense turbulence going over the spillways.

What does this have to do with aluminum cans? Well, the aluminum industry is heavily subsidized by cheap electrical power provided by the Bonneville Power Administration's dam system. We all benefit from this subsidized power; we pay about half the rate of the rest of the country for our electricity. But the aluminum industry gets an even bigger subsidy -- they pay less for a kilowatt hour than you do in your household. And the amount they buy accounts for 25% of BPA's revenue, which, when you think it through, means they are using more than 25% of BPA's output. In fact, one dam on the Columbia was built just for aluminum production.

So, our cheap household power, and even cheaper power for aluminum production, is directly leading to the decimation of salmon runs. This is what the environmentalists are talking about when they refer to "externalities." Externalities are the hidden costs, the environmental costs, the social costs of a particular industry or course of action. Few public officials want to deal with this part of the problem. At a recent meeting in Ilwaco regarding closing the ocean salmon fishing season, a Washington State Fisheries official responded that the dams weren't relevant to the discussion -- he claimed the focus was on lower Columbia fish, not up-river runs. How a salmon fisherman can tell the difference between a Snake River salmon vs. a Cowlitz fish, I don't know. I do know, however, that the aluminum industry is a big one, bureaucratic, with centralized capital; it can afford to lobby congressional representatives or launch lawsuits. The independent-minded, small businessman, who is the typical commercial fisherman or charter boat operator, is no match for this goliath.

But there are some things that we can do: we can recycle every bit of aluminum that crosses our path. That's important because it takes 1/20th of the electricity to make a new can from recycled aluminum rather than from virgin aluminum. In other words, if it took a dollar's worth of electricity to make a new can, it would take only 5¢ to make a can from recycled aluminum. We can remember to turn off lights when we leave the room. We can insulate our houses. We can lower the thermostat. We can dry our laundry outside rather than run an electric dryer. I do it -- my neighbor says I have laundry outside all winter. We can encourage our representatives to legislate a deposit on beverage cans so people with less self-discipline will be motivated to recycle. We can also encourage a solar tax credit so that more people will put solar water heaters in their houses. Our fishing towns along the Columbia could celebrate "We can live with less" day -- when we turn off the lights, the appliances, just to see what impact lowered electric consumption could have. After all, fishermen and the tribes are giving up their livelihoods to try to save salmon runs.

My husband stopped eating salmon a few years ago; he didn't want to eat one of the last of an endangered species. But, a few days ago, we opened the last jar of salmon that my dad canned -- it made a nice meal and was food for thought.

I'm not a native. I'm not a member of the Chinook tribe, or a Umatilla. But I, too, see salmon as more than food for the body. I was lucky enough to see the fishing at Celilo Falls when I was a kid. The Oregon Natural Resources Council is suggesting that we take down or stop construction on 18 dams in the Northwest in order to save salmon runs on the brink of extinction. I'd like to go one step further. I'd like to take down one of those big dams. I'd like to see Celilo again... in my lifetime.

I confess that I cannot understand how we can plot, lie, cheat and commit murder abroad and remain humane, honorable, trustworthy and trusted at home. Archabald Cox



Spring is here. Real spring, not that phoney calendaric one that happens in March. All who live on the Coast know March is winter. Almost seeming, in fact to be winter taking vengeance on us for having survived again its grey onslaught. But May, late May and June, that is spring.

The first tender asparagus from the bed, the first radish eaten unwashed in the garden, the first tiny, tender artichokes steamed and eaten cold with vinaigrette, no calendar can so speak of Spring.

Spring Chinook now enter streams large and small up and down the coast. Not all, but a surprising number of coastal streams still harbor a few of that deep bodied, small headed tribe. These are mostly native fish, secretive survivors who have escaped the often lethal attentions of the Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. Again this year I took one. It was a feisty male as bright and shiny, and symbolic of life from death, as a silver Easter Egg.

I wish I believed I could feel the same depth of reverence native peoples feel for the first salmon of the year. I doubt it's possible. The resonances of millennia of cultural background aren't available to me. As in any experience, I can only get from it what I bring with me.

I knew not to cut him crosswise. Old Chief Concomly warned Lewis and Clark's men after their winter at what later became Astoria, not to cut the first fish crosswise. To do so, he said, was to cut them off. Cut them lengthwise and you extend them.

So I cut him lengthwise. I took the two gleaming sides for myself and slid the carcass back into the water to add its organic richness to the stream as he would have with his after spawning death.

One half I smoked over alder to share with friends, the other is in the freezer for a later service.

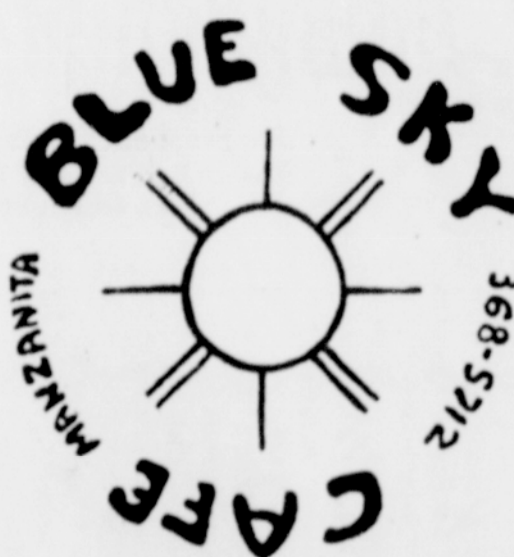
(Note: It is illegal to clean fish and leave what ODFW calls "the offal" in the water. You can be cited and fined for it. Be careful.)

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I have every sympathy with the American who was so horrified by what he had read of the effects of smoking that he gave up reading.  
Lord Conesford